

Analysis Of Affective Meaning In Tweets Related To Conflicts Between KNetz And Sea Netizens on X: A Semantic Study

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Abstract

The dispute between Korean netizens (KNetz) and Southeast Asian netizens (SEAbings) on Platform X (formerly Twitter) has attracted considerable attention due to the widespread use of emotionally and racially charged language. This cross-cultural online conflict provides a valuable context for examining how affective meanings are constructed and expressed in digital interactions. The conflict has generated various affective meanings that reflect users' attitudes and emotions toward the opposing side. Therefore, this study aims to identify the forms of affective meaning expressed in KNetz and SEAbings' tweets and examine how their linguistic functions are constructed through word choice. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method using 79 tweets selected through purposive sampling based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The tweets were identified using hashtags and keywords related to the conflict. The analysis was based on Leech's (1981) theory of meaning and language functions, focusing on expressive, directive, and aesthetic functions to identify affective meaning function. The findings show that the expressive function predominated in both groups, accounting for 80.0% of KNetz's tweets and 79.6% of SEAbings' tweets. The aesthetic function appeared in 43.3% of KNetz tweets and 36.7% of SEAbings tweets, while the directive function appeared in 15.7% of KNetz tweets and 16.3% of SEAbings tweets. These findings indicate that both groups utilize the expressive function through insults, profanity, and sarcasm to convey anger, hatred, and contempt toward the opposing group. This suggests that language in digital conflicts serves not only to exchange information but also to express strong emotional attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Language is used to express ideas, emotions, and social relationships, including in digital communication, where it helps users negotiate meaning, express attitudes, and interact with others online (Chaudhary & Asarsa, 2025). In linguistics, there is a field of study that examines meaning, known as semantics. Semantics is the scientific study of meaning in language (Saeed, 2003, p. 3). One branch of semantics is the types of meaning. Leech (1981) classifies meaning into seven types: conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflective, collocative, and thematic. Among these seven types, affective meaning is the most common in everyday communication because it conveys attitudes

and feelings through word choice, tone, and manner of delivery (Leech, 1981, p. 13), which are typically expressed through sarcasm, hyperbole, insults, or exaggeration (Mwihaki, 2004, p. 134). Therefore, affective meaning is a crucial aspect in understanding how language is used to express emotions and attitudes in various communicative contexts.

Recent research also shows that affective meaning or emotionally charged language plays a crucial role in digital communication. This type of meaning is used to express attitudes, build interpersonal relationships, and influence how messages are understood and responded to by users on various online platforms. In hate speech, Wanniarachchi et al. (2023) show that sentiment and discourse analysis can reveal harmful language patterns, highlighting how lexical choice reflects feeling and attitude. In digital discourse, Bączkowska (2021) found that users respond to Twitter insults in patterned ways such as deleting tweets or using sarcasm rather than randomly, while Zhao et al. (2025) show that social exclusion increases online aggression, indicating that emotion strongly shapes language in digital conflict. In semantic analysis of social media, Khalifatunnisa et al. (2026) demonstrate that meaning in online comments is shaped by word choice, context, and connotation, allowing users to express attitude, emotion, and persuasive intent. Similar research on affective meaning has been conducted in various forms of analysis, such as news articles (Aritonang, 2017; Salsabila & Yusuf, 2023; Latifah et al., 2023) and literary works (Taek, 2023; Triny & Wulandari, 2025).

Based on previous studies, affective meaning has been studied in depth in various contexts. However, these studies have not specifically examined how affective meaning in spontaneous, real-time conflicts between online communities from different cultural backgrounds. Research examining how affective meaning is linguistically constructed in cross-cultural conflicts between online fan communities remains very limited. Therefore, this study fills that gap by investigating the affective meaning expressed in disputes between KNetz and SEAbings on Platform X. Platform X (formerly Twitter) is a useful site for this kind of research because it allows open interaction across national and cultural lines, making it prone to conflict and misunderstanding (Zain et al., 2024). Each tweet also conveys the author's emotional stance (Guallar et al., 2016). In addition, the X app features an auto-translation function that allows users of different languages to understand tweets from users in other languages. For example, in the phenomenon between KNetz and SEAbings.

One such conflict, in the East and Southeast Asian online space, involves Korean netizens (KNetz) and Southeast Asian netizens (SEAbings). It flared up after an incident at a Day6 concert in Kuala Lumpur on January 31, 2026, when a Korean fan-site manager broke venue rules by bringing in a professional camera. When this became public, a KNetz user escalated the issue with tweets containing physical insults, mockery of economic status, and comparisons of Southeast Asians to monkeys, sparking a comment war between both sides. As stated by Martin & White (2005), language is used to show attitude, express emotions, influence readers, and indicate the social position of the speaker. This shows a linguistic phenomenon in which language not only conveys messages literally, but also shapes complex emotional states, such as anger, frustration, mockery, and support, through certain word choices on social media.

Unlike the formal or edited texts examined in earlier studies, tweets produced during this conflict are spontaneous, direct, and emotionally dense, offering richer and more naturally occurring data for the study of affective meaning. This study therefore analyzes the affective meanings expressed in tweets exchanged between KNetz and SEAbings on Platform X, using Leech's (1981) theory of meaning and language function as its main framework. Two questions guide this investigation: (1) What forms of affective meaning are contained in the tweets of user X from KNetz and SEAbings? (2) How is the function of affective meaning constructed through word choice in X user's tweets from KNetz and SEAbings.

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method which is suitable for linguistic studies aimed at describing, interpreting, and explaining the meanings and functions of language that emerge. Dull & Reinhardt (2014) explain that the qualitative descriptive approach is carried out using words which are then organized, grouped, compared, and analyzed to identify certain patterns. According to Creswell & Creswel (2023), qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or humanitarian issue. Sugiyono (2022) asserts that descriptive qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena experienced by the subjects and to uncover meaning through in-depth descriptions, using words rather than numbers. The goal is to facilitate understanding of the studied phenomenon by simplifying the data and highlighting its main components. The qualitative approach allows for in-depth semantic interpretation of tweets as contextual communicative acts. This theoretical framework combines the classification of affective meanings and three language functions (expressive, directive, and aesthetic) according to Leech (1981) to answer the research questions above. The data derived from the translations was validated using translation theory as a framework for analyzing the translation data, drawing on expert literature and comparisons with other machine translation tools such as DeepL and Papago.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary data for this study consists of 79 tweets sourced from Platform X (formerly Twitter) related to the linguistic conflict between KNetz and SEAbings, which took place from February 9, 2026, to March 25, 2026. Platform X was selected as the data collection source due to its nature as a dynamic and interactive public communication space, which often serves as a venue for expressing emotions and social conflicts between these two user groups. Overall, this study used 79 tweets as its primary data. This number was determined based on considerations of the feasibility of in-depth analysis in qualitative research, where the quality and depth of data analysis take precedence over quantity.

Data collection was conducted manually from February 12 to March 25, 2026, covering the peak period of the conflict following the Day6 concert incident in Kuala Lumpur on January 31, 2026. Tweets were identified through searches using the following hashtags and keywords: #KNetz, #SEAbings, #KNetzRacist, #SEAbingsAgainstRacism, #KNetzvsSEAbings, as well as keyword phrases such as “racist KNetz,” “SEA netizens,” “KNetz-SEAbings conflict,” and “Day6 Kuala Lumpur.” The search was conducted by accessing publicly available posts on the X platform and tracking replies related to the initial conflict post.

A total of 79 tweets were selected through purposive sampling based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Tweets were included in the corpus if they met the following criteria: (1) the tweets were posted from the KNetz perspective that is, by users who identified themselves or were identified as Korean netizens and from the SEAbings perspective that is, by users who identified themselves or were identified as Southeast Asian netizens; (2) The selected data consists of tweets written in English or containing sufficient English elements to support semantic analysis. However, tweets from KNetz written in Korean are still included if the automatic translation feature on the X Platform provides an English translation that can be used as the basis for analysis; (3) Tweets were generated as direct replies within conversation threads identifiable as conflicts between KNetz and SEAbings; and (4) contained lexical choices, phrases, or linguistic elements that could be categorized into affective meanings based on Leech’s (1981) framework.

Tweets that met the criteria were downloaded and documented in the form of screenshots and text copies for analysis. The data was then categorized into analysis tables based on its source (KNetz

or SEAbings) and the affective meaning it conveyed. This documentation process was carried out meticulously to preserve the authenticity, context, and integrity of the data. Each tweet was tagged and identified to facilitate tracking and cross-referencing during the analysis process. Based on the data collection techniques, the following are examples of tweets from the KNetz and SEAbings perspectives that contain affective meaning:



Figure 1. A screenshot of a tweet by one of the KNetz showing the affective meaning in their tweet on February 19



Figure 2. A screenshot of a reply tweet from SEAbings containing affective meaning, on February 12

Tweets are excluded if: (1) they are exact duplicates of other tweets already present in the corpus; (2) they contain incomplete sentences that cannot be semantically analyzed; (3) they are only indirectly related to the conflict without a clear affective form; or (4) they lack sufficient linguistic elements to be identified as part of an affective meaning. A total of 79 tweets that met all inclusion criteria were identified and included in the analysis. All usernames and information that could identify users were anonymized in accordance with ethical guidelines for social media research (Burkell et al., 2022).

Data Validation

Machine translation systems are often inaccurate and tend to struggle with translating ambiguous words because they lack clearly programmed contextual information. This is because translating a language is not merely a matter of replacing one word with another (Naveen & Trojovský, 2024). This process is quite complex because it requires an understanding of sentence

structure, grammar, and cultural context. To address these issues, this study will utilize translation theory as a framework for analyzing translation data through the literature of experts in the field.

Nida & Taber (1969) argued that a good translation must always take into account the response of the target reader (receptor). On the other hand, in a recent study, Munday (2016) criticized Nida's theory because the reader's response is considered highly abstract and difficult to measure with certainty in the real world. However, the current digital era offers a solution to this problem. Reader responses can be observed through their interactions in the virtual world. Therefore, this study utilizes user-to-user replies in the comment section on the X platform as a measurement tool. The meaning of the translated tweets can be validated through the sequence of user replies. Examining these reply threads aims to confirm whether the translated tweets are well understood by other users, particularly SEAbings. Therefore, if there are replies from SEAbings that respond meaningfully to KNetz's tweets, this serves as direct evidence that the translation feature

In the second phase to validate the data, repeated checks were conducted using translation engines. Each tweet in Korean was translated using three translation engines: the automatic translation feature on the X platform, Deepl, and Papago. In this second validation phase, Papago was specifically chosen as the third verification tool. The reason is that Papago was developed directly by Naver Corporation using a dataset of authentic Korean language. Because it was trained with this local data, Papago is far more sensitive and accurate at translating slang, abbreviations, and internet language styles that are frequently used by KNetz. By comparing the translation results from X, Google Translate, and Papago, the analysis of affective meaning can be ensured to be more accurate and free from machine translation errors.

Table 1. Example of Translation Triangulation and Evidence of User Response

Bahasa Sumber Korea	Terjemahan Otomatis X	Terjemahan Deepl	Terjemahan Papago	Response SEAbings
@Ous***** da**e 영어 잘하는데 가난하게 살아서 부럽다	You're so good at English, but living poor makes me jealous.	I envy you for being good at English even though you live in poverty	I'm envious that I'm poor and good at English	@cha**sm**h Rich? Y'all live in apartement not ur own house lmao while we have our own land & houses, even fields that can make our own food

Data analysis Procedures

The analytical technique used in this study is affective semantic analysis based on Leech's (1981) theory of affective meaning. This study aims to identify, categorize, and evaluate the affective meanings found in tweets, considering lexical and contextual meanings (Saeed, 2016). The analysis was conducted in five stages. In the First stage, all 79 tweets were read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of their linguistic and situational context. This familiarization process allowed the researcher to interpret each tweet within the context of the conflict between KNetz and SEAbings. Second, words, phrases, and clauses that convey emotions, attitudes, or judgments were discovered. This identification focused on linguistic aspects with the ability to communicate affective meaning, as indicated by Leech (1981). Third, the affective meanings of the identified tweets were determined through semantic analysis. This interpretation considered both the contextual meaning of the utterances within the interaction and their lexical meanings. The English machine translation

provided by the X platform served as the basis for the semantic analysis of tweets originally published in Korean.

Fourth, each identified affective meaning was classified based on the three language functions proposed by Leech (1981): expressive, directive, and aesthetic. The results of this classification were systematically presented in a table to facilitate a comparison of the functions of the affective meanings identified in the tweets from the perspectives of KNetz and SEAbings. Finally, these findings were compared between tweets generated from the KNetz and SEAbings perspectives to identify similarities and differences in the use of affective meanings. The results were then interpreted to explain how affective meanings were constructed and expressed linguistically during this online conflict. The frequency of each language function was also calculated and presented as percentages to facilitate comparison between the KNetz and SEAbings groups.

FINDINGS

Based on data collection, data related to the research phenomenon were obtained; however, before being presented further, it is important to identify and analyze the affective meanings contained in each tweet by KNetz and SEAbings on platform X. The focus of this analysis is on the form and function of affective meanings contained in each tweet, as well as the construction of affective meanings built by both parties. The identification of affective meanings in detail according to the date of the tweet and the responses from both parties is presented in a table. This section presents the findings from the analysis of 79 selected tweets, consisting of 30 tweets from KNetz and 49 tweets from SEAbings. The unequal distribution reflects the purposive sampling process, in which only tweets meeting the predetermined inclusion criteria were selected. The corpus of 79 tweets was considered sufficient because equal representation across groups is not the primary concern in qualitative research. Instead, the focus is on selecting information-rich data that are sufficient to answer the research questions (Lim, 2026).

This analysis is presented in the form of a table showing the forms of affective meaning with their language functions based on Leech (1981). Furthermore, the functions of the findings are described in the table below.

Table. 2 Forms and Function of Affective Meaning in Tweets Related to the KNetz vs. SEAbings Conflict on X

Language Function	KNetz	SEAbings	Description
Aesthetic	13 (43.3%)	18 (36.7%)	The meaning of the affective aesthetic function is conveyed indirectly by using words that contain sarcasm, irony, and ridicule to express emotions such as belittling and anger. The aesthetic function in this data is related to the expressive function, so in some of the tweet data, the aesthetic function appears together with the expressive function. This function is also directly related to connotative meaning because there are some tweets that display insults with negatively connoted words.

Directive	5 (16.7%)	8 (16.3%)	The directive function shows commands directly and indirectly. The emotions conveyed through this function are annoyance, anger, and commanding. This function appears together with other functions, whether expressive or aesthetic. Some tweets express commanding emotions through sarcasm and irony.
Expressive	24 (80.0%)	39 (79.6%)	The expressive function displays affective meaning both directly and indirectly. The emotions conveyed in this function are anger, contempt, and hatred. The use of harsh words directly shows the deep anger and annoyance of both parties. This function is also related to connotative meaning because insults carry negative connotative content.

The data above show that several language functions overlap, implying that some tweets contain two language functions at the same time. The expressive function is the most dominant, accounting for 80.0% of tweets on the KNetz side and 79.6% on the SEAbings side. According to Leech (1981, p. 40), the expressive function is directly related to affective meaning because language is used to express a person's feelings and attitudes through harsh words and exclamations. Similarly, Siregar et al. (2024) explain that the expressive function in language can serve as a place to create expressions of the feelings or emotions of the speaker or writer towards others. In this finding, only 25 main examples from the data are explained, showing affective meaning according to its function. Data that does not meet the criteria for significant affective meaning or is duplicated is excluded from this main analysis. These findings are explained in the discussion chapter below.

DISCUSSION

Expressive Functions in the Conflict Between KNetz and the SEAbings

In the data collected, the expressive function often displays negative emotions containing anger, annoyance, belittling, and insults. On the KNetz side, the expressive function is most clearly seen in how they choose words or phrases containing sarcasm and comparisons through economic superiority and cultural pride as the main means to express their emotions. The targeted emotions are feelings of arrogance and condescension. The following data illustrates this function:

Datum 1: KNetz (@Ous*****da**e, 10 Feb 2026):

"You speak English so well, but youre living in proverty, and im jealeous." (KNetz, 10 February 2026)

Datum 2: KNetz (@pod*****8, 10 Feb 2026)

"What? Can't hear you well because the GDP is small~. Korea, China, Japan live way better than Southeast Asia pretending to be great just because you speak American well?"

Datum 3: KNetz (@jo*****k7**89 (10 Feb 2026)

"These guys got their pride all puffed up 'cause they got colonized and lost their native tongue ohhh fucking pity guys"

Datum 4: KNetz (@um***3, 19 Feb 2026)

"It feels fucking horrifying that the day after Indonesians said they'd definitely boycott K-pop. These people are like cockroaches that won't die no matter how much insecticide you spray on them."

The data above shows that the expressive function in KNetz tweets contains emotions that belittle countries in Southeast Asia. According to Leech (1981, p. 13), affective meaning can reflect the personal feelings of the writer; in the context of this conflict, the feelings conveyed are a sense of superiority and judging others through the use of words such as 'ang', which contains expressions of arrogance and insults indicating feelings of superiority towards Southeast Asian countries. These expressions of feelings are marked in this phrase *"Can't hear you well because the GDP is small", "but youre living in proverty, and im jealeous", "These people are like cockroache"*.

The phrase clearly shows how KNetz expresses contempt for SEAbings. In data 4, it is indirectly related to the connotative meaning, it is marked by the expression *These people are like cockroaches*, the expression of Indonesian citizens such as cockroaches gives a negative connotation. Affective and connotative meanings generally always go hand in hand because rude or insulting words are related to a person's mood, connotative meanings usually convey feelings or affective meanings (Izuongere & Roshan, 2020). In the connotative sense, cockroaches are not only considered insects but tend to be considered to have negative connotations, namely like dirty, unwanted and disturbing creatures, so that in the data of 4 users express feelings of insult, condescension and disgust towards Indonesians.

Meanwhile, on the SEAbings side, the expressive function is directly shown by using coarse words or curses, so the affective meaning on this side takes a more retaliatory form, as illustrated below:

Datum 5: SEAbings (@pata***u, 11 Feb 2026)**

*"always tryna flex gdp shit meanwhile ur ppl su*cide ratio is sooo high...misogynist at its finest with small d*ck guys, u guys deff gonna vanish from this earth"*

Datum 6 : SEAbings (@Rlis277**, 14 Feb 2026)**

"Hey idiot, English is quite Important to learn, at least you know when other people call you PLASTIC FACE, SLANK EYES, SMALL DICK"

Datum 7: SEAbings (@arl***a_l*o, 14 Feb 2026)**

"if we stop to listening ur dumb kpop songs ur country would be broke bitchh"

Datum 8: SEAbings (@De*5***05, 15 Feb 2026)**

"Yr country don't hv plstc, cz yr pple use it right? Nyenye"

The data above constructs affective meaning directly through a series of expressions that are insulting and coarse; the insults cover various areas such as physical mockery, gender, and social criticism. For example, in data 5 the user uses the phrase *gdp shit, ur ppl su*cide ratio is sooo high, high misogynist* dan *small d*ck*. The phrase no longer displays ordinary anger but has reached the level of insults against sensitive issues. The user responded to previous insults from KNetz in data 2 by directly counterattacking using statistics that South Korea has a high suicide rate, followed by body shaming of Korean men. At the end of the tweet, the user used hyperbole that showed deep anger toward KNetz. This aligns with Mwihi's research (2004, p. 134), which notes that affective meaning often reflects negative attitudes toward the listener expressed through insults and hyperbole,

as in the tweet in data 5. Sama halnya dengan Data 4, terdapat makna konotatif yang terkandung di data 6 dan data 8. The word “*Plastic*” contains a connotative meaning that contains insults to the face of Koreans who are unnatural, ugly and often undergo plastic surgery. So that data 6 and 8 show the expressive function directly through toxic words and negative connotatives, especially in data 6 the use of capital letters that strengthen the intensity of anger emotions.

Directive Function in the Conflict Between KNetz and the SEAbings

The directive function, which is characterized by phrases or sentence structures aimed at influencing, pressuring, or controlling the interlocutor (Leech, 1981, p. 40), based on this functional data was identified 16.3% on the SEAbings side and 16.7% on the KNetz side. In this data, the affective directive meaning is shown through direct and indirect sentences, such as imperative sentences and negative interrogative sentences that simultaneously instruct an action that is threatening and depict the writer's emotional attitude. The following is data that displays affective meaning with a directive function:

Datum 9: KNetz (@pod***8, 10 Feb 2026)**

*“If Koreans seem like they're full-on crazy racists who discriminate against South Asians and worship white people, **then go get yourself checked into a mental hospital**, seriously We're exactly as racist as you guys and love white skin just as much Koreans, **stop with the self-pity about discriminating against South Asians**. We're just telling you we don't give a damn about you, okay?”*

Datum 10: KNetz (@k*i__*i_ , 10 Feb 2026)

“You write in Indonesian too huh, but you're using the alphabet? Aww that's so sad, don't you have your own native script? Be proud of your own culture! Love yourself!!”

Datum 11: KNetz (@da*890, 11 Feb 2026)**

“Don't be so obsessed with English and love your own country. Is it because of colonial rule that you couldn't preserve your own language much?”

Datum 12: KNetz (@um*3, 12 February 2026)**

“Take a look at this Indonesian family photo before you go ^^ They're all sitting together so amicably in the jungle.”

Datum 13: KNetz (@a**i8, 11 Feb 2026)**

“lol If you don't have your own language, just stay quiet~~”

From KNetz's perspective, affective meaning with a directive function is demonstrated through direct commands cloaked in sarcasm. In Data 9, the affective meaning is constructed through phrases containing commands and prohibitions; for example, in the phrase “*then go get yourself checked into a mental hospital and stop with the self-pity about discriminating against South Asians*,” the user conveys feelings of anger, defensiveness, and mockery, with the aim of getting SEAbings to stop belittling KNetz. The directive function in this data is represented by an imperative sentence. The order to go to a mental hospital is not intended as advice, but rather as an insult that directly targets the interlocutor's mental state. However, because the directive function is entwined with the expressive and aesthetic functions rather than appearing independently in data points 10, 11, and 13, the affective meaning becomes more complex. The overlap of these two functions influences the formation of affective meaning. When two linguistic functions coexist in a single tweet, they enhance one another and create a more complex affective meaning. Insults are therefore communicated indirectly through the context's implied meaning rather than directly.

In Data 10, the directive function overlaps with the aesthetic function. The phrase “*Be proud of your own culture! Love yourself!!*” is grammatically an imperative sentence that is generally used to encourage or motivate someone. However, in the context of this tweet, the imperative is actually used as sarcasm: KNetz implies that SEAbings lack an authentic culture worth being proud of. This is where the aesthetic function comes into play through irony, which conceals an insult behind words that sound supportive. The overlap between the directive and aesthetic functions creates a more

complex affective meaning. On the surface, the expression appears to be encouraging, but in its context it conveys ridicule and a sense of cultural superiority. If the directive function were used alone, the intended insult would be easier to recognize. However, because it is conveyed through irony, readers must interpret the statement within its context to grasp its intended meaning. This reinforces the affective meaning implied in the tweet.

Data 12 shows a similar pattern but with a different mechanism. The tweet *“Take a look at this Indonesian family photo before you go ^^ They’re all sitting together so amicably in the jungle”* combines the directive function *“take a look”* that is, an invitation or command with the aesthetic functions of metaphor and irony through the phrase *“Indonesian family photo...in the jungle.”* The directive function invites the reader to look at an image, while the aesthetic function provides additional meaning through an implicit comparison between Indonesians and monkeys. The combination of these two functions reinforces the affective meaning of insult and belittlement toward the target group. The overlap between the directive and aesthetic functions allows the insult to be conveyed indirectly, requiring readers to interpret its intended meaning through the context. The combination of directive and aesthetic functions conveys affective meanings such as racism and insults indirectly. Although no harsh words are used, these meanings can still be understood through context and are even reinforced by the use of the “^^” emoticon, which gives a friendly impression.

This overlap of functions indicates that, in the context of digital conflict, affective meaning is not always conveyed directly. The combination of directive and aesthetic functions allows affective meaning to be constructed through irony, sarcasm, or indirect comparisons, thereby making the users’ emotions and attitudes more potent than if they relied on only one linguistic function. The interpretation of affective meaning in this study considers not only the lexical meaning of an utterance but also the context of its use in digital interactions. This is because affective meaning is often shaped by the relationship between word choice and the communicative situation. These findings support O’Driscoll’s (2024) view that an utterance can have more than one layer of meaning. Therefore, when language functions overlap, affective meaning is not always expressed directly but is understood through the context and the manner in which the utterance is delivered.

Datum 14: SEAbings (@li***ez, 10 Feb 2026)**

“STFU, just say you can't speak english very well, that's why you can only reply in your own language”

Datum 15: SEAbings (@wn*ei, 12 Feb 2026)**

“OPEN YOUR EYES WIDE, JUST SAY YOU DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH

Datum 16: SEAbings (@RW***2***5, 14 Feb 2026)**

“Hey guys, I think we should stop before he kills himself in his tiny apartment”

Datum 17: SEAbings (@R***85, 14 Feb 2026)**

“Shut up stupid kid, your country will be destroyed when the Malacca Strait is closed, your country will be as poor as in 1950”

Datum 18: SEAbings (@wn*ei, 12 Feb 2026)**

“OPEN YOUR EYES WIDE, JUST SAY YOU DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH”

Datum 19: SEAbings (@ro*r_m**e, 18 Feb 2026)**

“You use plastic surgery because you are insecure of yourself. Grow some balls”

On the SEAbings side, the affective meaning of the directive function is generally conveyed more directly through strong imperative expressions. In Data 14, the directive function is realized through the abbreviation *“STFU”* (SHUT THE FUCK UP), which functions as a forceful command directed at KNetz. The use of capital letters further reinforces the speaker’s emotions, particularly anger and annoyance. As a result, the affective meaning is strengthened through the combination of

the imperative expression and its graphic emphasis. Similarly, in Data 15, 17, 18, and 19, the directive function is expressed through commands telling KNetz to remain silent or become self-aware. Unlike these examples, Data 16 demonstrates an overlap between the directive and aesthetic functions. The directive function appears in the phrase *"I think we should stop,"* where the modal verb *"should"* indicates a moderate form of suggestion (Bondar, 2015). However, within the context of the tweet, the expression does not function as a genuine recommendation. Instead, it is used sarcastically, as shown in the phrase *"before he kills himself in his tiny apartment."* The overlap between the directive and aesthetic functions strengthens the affective meaning by conveying ridicule and belittlement indirectly rather than through explicit offensive language.

These results show that some tweets also combine directive and aesthetic functions, even though the directive function on the SEAbings side is typically expressed more directly than on the KNetz side. Because the intended insult is communicated through sarcasm and contextual meaning rather than just direct commands, this overlap complicates the affective meaning.

Aesthetic Function in the Conflict Between KNetz and the SEAbings

Affective meaning in the aesthetic function is related to irony, metaphor, sarcasm, and wordplay (Leech, 1981). In the data, the aesthetic function accounted for 43.3% of the tweets on the KNetz side and 36.7% of the tweets on the SEAbings side. Examples of affective meaning with the aesthetic function are presented below.

Datum 20 : KNetz (@so**1g*a, 11 Feb 2026)**

"Why do you guys use the Dutch alphabet instead of Indonesian script? π π π Love yourself~"

Datum 21: KNetz (@sa**lk9***7h, 12 Feb 2026)**

"Sorry I'm living not as poor as you guys even though I can't speak English?"

In the data above, KNetz use sarcasm to convey their feelings, which is indicated by the phrase *"Sorry I'm living not as poor as you,"* showing their sense of superiority by mocking Indonesia's economy. From the KNetz's perspective, the affective meaning with aesthetic function also appears in other functions, as in data 1, 2, 10, 12, which use sarcasm and irony within them. Similar to data 1, the use of sarcasm shows a feeling of superiority and to belittle Indonesia's economy. According to Banasik-Jemiłniak (2021), irony is used daily in social interactions, playing various roles in human communication.

Meanwhile, in the data from 20 users, they expressed feelings of insult and belittlement through sarcasm and the emoticon π π π, which added an element of mockery. In the data from 12, *"Take a look at this Indonesian family photo before you go ^^ They're all sitting together so amicably in the jungle."* This tweet represents an affective meaning that does not contain any harsh words and seems like a directive function to invite viewing of the photo but also contains an aesthetic function within it. In the context of conflict with siblings, this tweet implicitly conveys emotion through sarcasm, which contains negative feelings in the form of insults and belittlement that lead to racism. The use of the ^^ emoticon adds a more evident sense of mockery.

Datum 22: SEAbings (@Lac**yT***s, 10 Feb 2026)**

"Speakeu engliseu, pleaseu. I donteu understandeu abouteu whateu you saideu"

Datum 23: SEAbings (@jay***c, 11 Feb 2026)**

“sorry but we can use CAPSLOCK since we use alphabet lol you must not know the difference between hahahaha or HAHAAAAAAAAHA you only know ⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨”

Datum 24: SEAbings (@ne**da6**9, 12 Feb 2026)**

“what did you guys learn from school? geez u guys sounds so stupid, i feel bad actually:”)”

Datum 25: SEAbings (@neo***r, 13 Feb 2026)**

“Forgot to say if their bodies were being cremated, was it gonna turn into ashes or something like gooey consistency?”

Similarly, the siblings also use sarcasm and irony to express their feelings. Data 22 shows feelings of mockery through the use of the letters “*eu*” at the end of each word; this letter is used to ridicule Koreans who, when speaking English, always end words with ‘*eu*’. Indirectly, the tweet laughs at KNetz and belittles the way they speak. In data 23 and 24, sarcasm and irony also appear, showing emotions of pride and belittlement, as evidenced by the use of capital letters. Meanwhile, in data 24, feelings of mockery and belittlement are marked through irony and sarcasm, which indicate a sense of concern as marked in the phrase *i feel bad actually:’)*.

The tweet does not genuinely show a feeling of concern or pity; what is actually intended to be expressed is annoyance wrapped in sarcasm and concern. Furthermore, in the data of 25 aesthetic functions, the sarcasm feels harsh because it appears like a normal question, but in affective meaning, the tweet aims to convey feelings of frustration and anger towards netizens. Connotative meaning also plays a role in the tweet because the word ‘plastic’ here does not refer to an object but refers to Koreans often undergoing plastic surgery. This argument is reinforced by Qisti (2021) study, which reveals that the word ‘plastic’ has a negative connotative meaning for Koreans because it contains hate speech and mockery. Thus, the tweet not only expresses annoyance but also insults physical appearance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that affective meaning is constructed through harsh words, sarcasm or irony, both from the side of KNetz and Seabings. In this conflict, the expressive function plays a significant role in conveying the feelings of users from each group. It can be seen that the affective meaning expressed by both groups includes feelings of anger, hatred, belittling, and mocking. In addition, this study found that some tweets contained overlapping language functions, particularly a combination of the directive and aesthetic functions. This overlap reinforces affective meaning by allowing emotions and attitudes to be expressed indirectly through sarcasm and contextual meaning, rather than through explicit offensive language.

These findings support Leech’s (1981) theory of affective meaning by demonstrating that language functions contribute to the construction and interpretation of affective meaning in digital communication. This study also highlights how affective meaning is expressed in cross-cultural online conflicts through various linguistic strategies. However, this study is limited to the analysis of affective meaning in tweets related to a single online conflict. Future research is expected to examine other types of meaning or different forms of digital Communication to provide a broader understanding of meaning construction in online interactions.

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